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## VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE IN HIGH SCHOOL

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The importance of giving some direction to the youth of today in his very difficult task of finding for what occupation in life he is suited, and the necessity of keeping him, if possible, from drifting into work unintelligently, have led us, in the DeKalb Township High School, into a definite scheme for vocational guidance. This paper presents suggestively the outline we have used for this work.

For purposes of description we may divide our work in vocational guidance into three departments: first is what might be called the general survey work with a class of pupils; second, the investigation of industrial conditions in the community; and, third, detailed work with the individual pupil in the endeavor to make as definite as possible the conditions, requirements, and opportunities in a given occupation.

Let us take up our work in DeKalb along these three general lines. In the survey work, the principal meets a class in the morning assembly once a week and presents the problem to its members with the following aim: namely, to impress upon the student the importance of a careful choice of his work and the necessity of an accurate knowledge of the various occupations, both that he may decide whether he is fitted to succeed in the particular line of work that he selects, and also that, before plunging into a given occupation, he may fully understand the social conditions which will surround his work, his opportunities for advancement, and the social position into which he would necessarily be brought.

The outline as given above may cover two or three talks. The plan is to give the student next, as it were, a bird's-eye view of modern industry considered as related groups, and to discuss these various groups with reference to their fundamental characteristics. This general view corresponds to what might be accomplished by taking a boy through various typical industries and pointing out

their characteristic points. It is something akin to what Franklin's father did when he took his son to see men at work at various occupations so that the boy might make a more intelligent choice of an occupation.

The groups used for discussion are adapted from the classification of industries as reported by the Census Bureau and are as follows: (1) mercantile or selling industries, covering retail stores, wholesale selling; (2) the manufacturing and the building industries, including the metal trades, woodworking trades, carpentry, and the like; (3) the transporting industries, principally the railroads; (4) extractive industries, agriculture, forestry; (5) banking; (6) (a) the professions, law, medicine, teaching, etc.; (b) artistic professions, music, art, acting, etc.; (7) government service, consular service, postal service, army, etc.; (8) personal service.

In treating these general groups we consider largely those industries which are found in our community. For instance, in the manufacturing industries, not having the textile industries at hand, we do not consider them except to mention them briefly, but give our time to the steel industry, gas engine works, etc.—industries which are represented locally.

Space will not permit a discussion of all these groups of industries. However, a discussion of one of them more in detail will help to show the general method of treatment.

In our work at DeKalb we begin with the mercantile industries, or the problem of selling goods, and discuss it from the point of view of the clerk, which probably will be the position open to boys and girls going into the local stores. By way of introduction we try to show that the selling of goods is really the controlling end of industry, and is, therefore, one of the fundamental aspects in modern business. It is then pointed out that there are five fundamental points to be considered in the make-up of the salesman, which may be stated in general as follows:

1. A salesman must have a pleasant personality, be easy to approach, and able to approach others. In a word, he must be a good "mixer." On the reverse side, he must not be grouchy or cranky, else he will drive away trade in spite of other good qualities which he may have.

2. A salesman must be a ready talker. He must be able to get

attention; to be at no loss for words, and able to talk persuasively and convincingly.

3. A salesman must be, to some degree, observant of people and a judge of human nature. He must size people up as to the quality of goods that they will probably buy. He should, for instance, show the customer goods suited to his pocket-book and appealing to his taste. He must be quick to realize whether his arguments are appealing to his customer or not, and he must know how to change his talk, when it does not appeal.

4. A salesman must know his goods thoroughly, their advantages and peculiarities. That is, he must study the goods which he handles, know what they are made of, what their good qualities are, and what they may be used for. He must study his competitors' goods in the same way.

5. He must have enthusiasm for his work and for his goods. It is this enthusiasm which makes trade.

As to pay, opportunities to advance, etc., we consider briefly the clerk in the small store; dry goods, grocery, etc.; the clerk in a department store; the salesman on the road.

In general we can say that there is always a demand for a good salesman and that the man who makes a record by his sales is sure to receive attention and promotion. Attention also is called to the fact that as a rule there is more money in the selling end of the business than in the manufacturing or the accounting end.

We note, also, that the conditions under which a salesman works usually are good. On the other hand, there are certain conditions of strain, due to the fact that the clerk must be on his feet all day long, must work overtime at rush seasons, etc., which may be counted as drawbacks in the work.

As concrete examples of men successful in the selling end of business we have the well-to-do men of our town. These are men who have made a competence because they knew how to buy and sell. The great merchant princes of modern times, Marshall Field, P. D. Armour, A. T. Stewart, and others, furnish great examples of successful selling.

Sometimes a student asks how he can determine whether he has any talent for selling goods. In the first place, a plan is recommended that is a rather severe test of selling ability: canvassing

for articles which are sold from house to house. This sort of work will tell quickly whether the individual has the personality, the ability to talk readily and easily, and the power to put up a convincing and persuasive argument. The work is hard and trying, but it will test selling ability thoroughly. Another way suggested is to obtain a clerkship in one of our stores during the summer vacation. Here, again, one can test out personality, conversational ability, judgment of human nature in the interesting problem of selling goods.

I have found that articles in the leading magazines furnish excellent material for use in these talks. For instance, one frequently can illustrate a point by reading a portion from the articles on business which appear from time to time in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, and the *Outlook*. In order to make this material readily available, I have made up, from time to time, a large and useful scrapbook, which contains material of this sort.

When the discussion of the groups of occupations is completed, a change is made in the plan of the work. So far we have been taking up the demands of particular occupations. The plan now is to discuss with the students those personal qualifications which are necessary for successful work, not in one, but in any line of endeavor. As might be expected, the moral qualities come decidedly to the front and the discussion is largely a treatment of practical ethics. Our experience shows that in its effect on individuals the treatment of the subject from this point of view is decidedly worth while.

In this part of the work we take up personal qualifications under the six general heads, personality, health, mental ability, character, friends, and loyalty. Personality, for example, is discussed as made up of such elements as voice, dress, manners, tact, etc. Time will hardly permit considering these heads in detail, but, in all, the point is made that youth is a plastic period in which may be developed certain designated characteristics most advantageous to the individual in his dealings with other people in the world of business.

We must leave the survey work with this hurried consideration of it and take up some of the other topics which form part of the work in vocational guidance.

Vocational guidance is more effective when based upon some knowledge of the vocational plans of the students. As a result of the vocational survey of our school we found the following facts: 23 per cent of all the students, or 50 per cent of the girls, were planning to go into teaching; 30 per cent of our students had made no choice of an occupation; 10 per cent were planning to go into bookkeeping and stenography; 8 per cent were going into agriculture; 5 per cent of the boys were planning to go into engineering; in all, twenty-four different occupations were represented.

Several things of value were a result of this survey. First, we now see that we are, in a way, a preparatory school for teachers, and we can adapt our work to some degree with this end in view, advising girls as to the opportunities in teaching, the preparation, etc. With 30 per cent of our students undecided as to an occupation we have a definite problem to supply them with some means for a decision. With 8 per cent of our boys going into agriculture we feel that our courses in this subject are worth while. In general, the light which was thrown on the planning of our curriculum by this investigation repaid us many times for our work.

In following out our vocational work, we found that to make it most worth while we must have a better knowledge of our community on its industrial side. We must know definitely such things as the pay, the conditions of employment, the opportunities for advancement, etc. To this end we undertook a vocational survey of our industries. We used several blanks in getting the necessary information. We used one for the commercial business, one for manufacturing business, and another for agriculture. The men in charge of these departments in the school obtained the information to fill out these blanks. I give herewith our commercial blank (p. 232).

Some of the results of our investigation were as follows: In the commercial lines the great majority of employers asked that boys be trained thoroughly in three things, penmanship, spelling, and arithmetic. Although a few asked for training in salesmanship and some for trustworthiness, these three items were all that was asked of the school. This, certainly, is a simple training for the school to give. On the trade side we found, likewise, that the majority of the shops did not ask for a very high degree of skill.

In general, again, three things were asked for: a boy should be able to run a drill press, read a mechanical drawing and a micrometer caliper. The foremen stated that they expected to put the boys on simple work and they would give the boys such training as was necessary.

DEKALB TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Boys

Date\_\_\_\_\_191

FACTS ABOUT EMPLOYMENT

1. Do you employ boys (under the age of 20) ? . . . . . About how many ? . . . . .

2. What do you employ boys to do ? . . . . .

3. Boys at present employed (or previously employed) you have found deficient in:  
(Please underscore subjects in which boys are lacking.)

4. Aside from the subjects indicated, what would you like to have boys trained in ?

5. About what do you pay boys per week to start ? . . . . .

6. What opportunity is there in your business for their advancement ? . . . . .

7. Do you think there is need for a night school in this city for the training of employed boys and men ? . . . . .

8. Do you employ men (above the age of 20) ? . . . . . About how many ? . . . . .  
Are they skilled or not ? . . . . . What do you employ men to do ? . . . . .

9. What are the chief requisites for a good workman in your line of business ? . . . . .

Name of firm . . . . .

Line of business . . . . .

Information given by . . . . .

Information secured by . . . . .

School work.—Arithmetic; Rapid Calculation; Bookkeeping; Penmanship; Spelling; English; Office Training; Salesmanship.

Character.—Obedience; Moral Ideals; Loyalty to Firm; Trustworthiness; Promptness.

Personality.—Courtesy to Patrons; Cleanliness of Person; Neatness.

. . . . .

. . . . .

(This information is for the use of the high-school authorities only, and will be considered strictly confidential.)

As to pay, we found that in general it was low, varying for girls in the commercial work from \$4.00 a week for beginners up to \$8.00 a week for girls with experience; and for boys, from the same minimum up to \$10.00 a week. In some trades as high as 19 cents an hour was paid.

In general, our survey showed that there is not, in our town, as much of a demand for trained beginners as we had thought. The

problem faces us, whether we shall leave our boys unskilled for the jobs that are open to them, or whether we shall endeavor to train them for positions in the larger towns. We found, also, that there are few positions open to the boy and that promotion is quite slow. This is the reason why so many young fellows seek employment in the larger cities. In general, our survey has raised some critical problems which we must face, though the answer to them is not at all clear.

Finally, the work in vocational guidance must culminate in help to individual pupils in the choice of an occupation. Let us see how this works out. From the survey work, the pupil is given some general idea of the scope and range of business. He sees, in the large, the ability and training required for success in any of the given groups of occupations, and he can choose more intelligently the general direction in which he wishes to go. When he has decided upon a particular occupation, the school has, from its community investigation and in its library, detailed information as to the amount of training needed, the probable pay, the conditions of employment, the opportunities for advancement, etc., and the individual can prepare himself with a clear idea of the conditions into which he is to go.

For example, in our manual-training work, we ask the boys taking machine work to read up on the industrial status of that occupation—for instance, boys in woodworking, on the conditions in the woodworking industries. Thus definite information is given the individual on his prospective occupation. Likewise, more intelligent direction can be given a student as to his choice of courses when one knows the occupation which he has chosen. Boys preparing for medicine, engineering, or law, etc., can be asked to take the appropriate courses in preparation for these professions.

Finally, in aiding individual students we find it worth while to keep track of them with reference to placing them in positions. We let our employers know that we are, in a way, an employment bureau, and that we will endeavor to supply them with efficient help when called upon. Likewise, our students realize that the school is an avenue to employment, and that a good school record is a valuable asset in obtaining a position. This reacts toward better work in school. We endeavor also to keep a record of a



student's characteristics and vocational abilities upon a permanent record card in order to have data for recommendations.

As to the field of work of the vocational counselor, our experience has shown that it consists in placing the information upon which a decision can be based before the individual and requiring him to decide, and not in analyzing the individual and then making the decision for him. In the present state of psychological and social analysis, we are not in a position to make such an important decision for the individual, except along general lines. We have found that the vocational counselor does his best work as an adviser and guide rather than as an arbiter.

In conclusion, let us state briefly what our experience has shown as to the value of vocational direction in the high school. First, while it is admittedly no panacea for all the difficulties in the choice of an occupation, we have found that it is decidedly helpful to the pupils in general by reason of the fact that it brings into mind the importance of the choice of a vocation, and, by helping students to understand something of the industrial opportunities about them and something of the skill and training needed in particular occupations, a more intelligent choice of a life-work is brought about. Thus some social saving results through getting individuals into occupations for which they are fitted. Secondly, there is a decidedly beneficial reaction on the school and school spirit because of the work. Through it the pupil gets some of the ideals which are necessary for efficient work in life and this cannot help but react toward more efficient work in school. Finally, I believe the work justifies itself in a very large degree because it brings the school into rather intimate touch with business needs, business ideals, and business men, and this is certainly worth while.

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